ASSOCIATION

To the Chairman and members of the St. Germans Rural Sanitary Authority.

Gentlemen,

Again it is my duty to present to you my annual report as to the health and Sanitary condition of the Union during the past year. (1893)

The district has an area of 44,712 acres and the population on the census of 1891 was 15,080.

During the year 1893 the number of births registered in the whole district was three hundred and sixty two, being a rate of 24 per thousand.

The total number of deaths was two hundred and forty five giving a rate of 16·24 per thousand as against 18·1 in 1892.

Thirty four of the deaths were among children under one year of age and eighty among persons of sixty five years and upwards. Twenty eight deaths were recorded as due to zymotic diseases, viz:-

5 from scarlet fever
9 ,, typhoid fever
2 ,, puerperal fever
6 ,, measles
1 ,, whooping cough
5 ,, diarrhoea

giving a zymotic death rate of 1·85 per thousand.

Fourteen deaths have occured from cancer during the year as against twelve in the year 1892 so that this disease does not appear to be much on the increase in this district.

Two hundred and twenty six cases of infectious diseases were notified, viz:-

21 cases of erysipelas
145 ,, ,, scarlet fever
1 ,, ,, typhus fever
57 ,, ,, typhoid fever

2 cases of puerperal fever giving a rate of 14·9 per 1,000 of the population.

Out of the 362 children born during the year, 275 have been vaccinated and only 67 returned as unvaccinated which were due to deaths, removals and postponements. 120 remain unaccounted for of these. 80 have been born since the last public vaccination; leaving a very small proportion of children over the specified age unvaccinated. There have been no prosecutions during the year.

In the St. Germans division there were sixty seven births and thirty eight deaths registered, giving a birth-rate of 23·28 and a death rate 13·2 per thousand respectively as against 24:2 and 14·1 in 1892.

Of the deaths four occurred among children under one year old and twelve at the age of sixty five and upwards.

One only was recorded as being due to Zymotic disease viz: Enteric fever giving a zymotic death rate of ·34 per thousand. In January three cases of scarlet fever were notified from Crafthole and one from Downderry. In each case infection was distinctly traced to Plymouth or Devonport. In August six cases occurred in Hessenford which was imported from the neighbouring district; and in November a member of a family at Downderry contracted the disease at Plymouth which spread through the household, but was under careful precautions and isolation restricted to the one house. In February and beginning of March an extensive outbreak of measles occurred at Crafthole and Port Winkle on account of which the schools at Sheviock and Crafthole were closed for three weeks.

The supply of water at Sheviock and Port Winckle has been improved and means taken at Polbathick for better storage of water and prevention of waste.

There was great scarcity of water during August and September at the east end of St. Germans. A well on the hill

(Quarry Street) which had been closed for many years, was re-opened, but it was not until December that there was any amount of water in it. A sample will in due course be analysed, and I hope it may prove a good and reliable supply for the tenants of that property. There still however, remain several houses in the Quay road and on the hill a long distance from any supply, the drainage and water supply of Downderry and Crafthole still require the consideration of the Authority.

In the South division there were two hundred and one births registered giving a birth rate of 24·58 per thousand and one hundred and fifty eight deaths giving a death rate of 19·32 per thousand as against a birth rate of 30·1 and a death rate of 21·1 per thousand in 1892.

Of these, twenty one were under one year of age and fifty were at the age of sixty five and upwards.

Twenty five deaths were recorded as being due to Zymotic diseases, viz:-

5 from scarlet fever
8 ,, typhoid fever
2 ,, puerperal fever
5 ,, measles
1 ,, whooping cough
4 ,, Diarrhoea

giving a Zymotic death rate of 3·05 per thousand as against 1.3 in 1892.

Scarlet fever has been epidemic in this division during a great part of the year more particularly during the first four months when twenty five cases occurred at Kingsand and Cawsand nineteen at Torpoint and nine at Millbrook. These places being so near and in such constant communication with Plymouth and Devonport, it is impossible to prevent the spreading of such an infectious disease. many other cases have also been reported from outlying districts,

but these mostly were isolated cases. In one instance the disease was conveyed by a milkcarrier from one of the centres to her own family. Consequently she was at once prohibited from taking round the milk.

Typhoid fever has been prevalent almost throughout the year, particularly at Millbrook, where forty seven cases have occurred and nearly every case could be traced to defective drains or polluted water. Many wells have consequently been closed, causing a great run on the few good wells in the village. It is, however, to be hoped the new water supply and sewerage will be the means of stamping out this disease.

A few isolated cases have been reported from outlying places, and all traceable to the use of polluted water.

A serious epidemic of measles occurred at Willcove and neighbourhood in April and May, the number of cases amounting to about a hundred, four terminating fatally. It was in consequence considered advisable to close the school at Serrifield from April 17th to May 15th.

The school at Antony was also closed from September 25th to November 6th in consequence of a severe outbreak of whooping cough among the children in Antony village and the neighbouring hamlets and cottages. During this time the school closets, which were not in a good sanitary condition, were re-arranged and improved, and the ventilation of the school room attended to.

The well in Antony village has been enclosed and the water piped down to a tap in a more convenient position. The village has also been partially drained. I strongly recommend the Sanitary Authority to complete the drainage at once.

I analysed a sample of water from the well at the Ring of bells and found it free from organic matter and ammonia.

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The urinals at Torpoint is in a very unsanitary condition and it is impossible to keep it clean and wholesome. It therefore required to be rebuilt and connected with the sewer instead of draining onto the beach as it now does.

A urinal has been built on the beach at Cawsand with efficient arrangements for flushing. Those at Kingsand and Millbrook require to be entirely reconstructed.

The stream on the South side of West Street, Millbrook is in a dangerously polluted condition, there not being sufficient water to carry away the drainage from the closets that are allowed to be discharged into it. Steps should at once be taken to thoroughly clean the bed of the stream and to prevent further pollution. There are a number of pigs kept in the village which in a place so thickly populated is most objectionable, for however clean they may be kept, they must at some time or other become a nuisance injurious to the health of the surrounding inhabitants.

In the summer I recommended that a man should devote the whole of his time to flushing the sewers and to systematically and regularly flush them with disinfectants.

I did not feel myself justified to accede to the suggestion of the Sanitary Authority with regard to recommending the schools at Millbrook to be closed during the epidemic of scarlet and typhoid fever for just at that time there were but few cases being notified and my instructions from the Local Government Board say, "It is a step that seldom ought to be enforced except in the presence of an actual epidemic nor even then as a matter of routine, nor unless there be a clear prospect of preventing the propagation of disease such as could not be looked for from less comprehensive action". Though admitting the desirability of closing schools in rural districts where the children are assembled from distant hamlets and isolated cottages, I

doubt the benefit of taking such a step in a place so thickly populated as Millbrook provided the children from infected houses are excluded.

In the North division there were ninety four births and forty nine deaths registered, giving a birth rate of 23·55 and a death rate of 12·17 per thousand against a birth and death rate of 27·5 and 14·2 per thousand respectively for 1892.

Of these, five were under one year and nineteen at the age of sixty five and upwards. Two deaths were recorded as being due to Zymotic diseases, viz:-

1 from measles and

1 from diarrhoea,

giving a Zymotic death rate of ·49 per thousand.

In January there was an epidemic of scarlet fever in St. Mellion and the immediate neighbourhood in consequence of which the schools at St. Mellion were closed from January 4th to February 6 th.

In April some scattered cases of scarlet fever occurred at West Town Horton and Paynters Cross infection being distinctly traced to communication with an infected house in Devonport.

Other cases also occurred in Pillaton in April and although here the origin of the disease could not be definitely traced it was considered most probable that it arose from the same source as the preceding cases as the places are almost adjacent.

A well at Pillaton Mill was ordered to be closed on account of pollution.

The well supplying all the cottages at Warbrell, being liable to pollution, was on notice being given, repaired by the landlord and enclosed, and a pump fixed.

The public well at Quethiock which I directed your attention to in my last year's report, remains uncovered.

No steps have yet been taken to improve the water supply of Landrake or Antony passage.

The landing of trwn soil in the district remains unchecked, and although it is said to be so valuable as a manure, some stringent regulations should be adopted and enforced to prevent the landing and drawing of it to be such a nuisance as it is at present to those residing near where it is landed, stored or spread.

In all cases where notices have been given of the existence of nuisances measures have promptly been taken to abate them.

The Byelaws which have been so long under consideration have not as yet been adopted. I would here suggest that the Sanitary Authority obtain power under Sec: 23 of the Public Health Acts Amendment Act 1890 to make byelaws for keeping water closets supplied with sufficient water for flushing, which would be particularly serviceable with regard to Millbrook which is now having a sewerage system and water supply carried out, and to those places which have recently been sewered and supplied with water, where it is difficult under existing circumstances to compel persons to provide efficient means for flushing water closets.

Five samples of water have been sent to the County Analyst who reported four to be wholesome and fit for domestic purposes and one to be impure and unfit for use.

I can only re-iterate what I said in my last annual report that it is a matter of regret that there is no hospital available for treating cases of infectious disease or any means whereby they might be isolated which to a great extent accounts for the continuance of the alarming number of cases of scarlet fever that I have had to report.

Neither is there any apparatus for disinfecting clothing or bedding. As there are a means of defence against the spread of infectious disease, I think they demand your most serious attention.

Enclosed you will find a form from the Sanitary Committee of the County Council which gives you a summary of the work carried out during the year and the health of the district.

I remain, Gentlemen,

Your obedient Servant,

J. BEDFORD KERSWILL,
Medl. Off. of Health.

St. Germans,

January, 1894.